BIOGRAPHY

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F. B. COLEMAN, A MEDICAL STUDENT OF THE 1830'S

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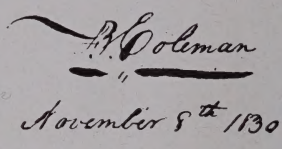
Recently, in examining a collection of old books which had been given to the Library of the Louisiana State University School of Medicine it was found that two of them were of unusual interest. On the fly leaf of the books is the inscription "F. B. Coleman," with his place of residence given as Lexington, Kentucky. On further examination, it was found that one was the manuscript lecture notes, and the other a text used by Coleman while a student at the Medical Department of Transylvania University.

In the catalogues of this school, Coleman is listed as a student for the sessions 1830-31 and 1831-32. His residence is given as Lexington and his preceptors as Drs. Pindell and Satterwhite. At this time Coleman could not have found a better school in the United States to train him in the art and practice of medicine. The medical department of this university always had an unusual faculty, and at no time was the school without some nationally known physician as a member of its faculty. The university was heavily endowed for a frontier school of that day, and its equipment and library compared favorably with any of the schools of the East.

At the time of Coleman's matriculation, Dr. Benjamin Winslow Dudley (1785-1870) was Professor of Anatomy and Surgery. He had been associated with Transylvania since 1815 and continued this association until 1850. It was not until 1844 that he consented that the chair of anatomy and surgery be separated. At that time he resigned the professorship of anatomy to devote himself entirely to surgery. As a surgeon, Dr. Dudley was without an equal in the middle west. His particular hobby was the roller bandage, and in his hands it became an agency equal in importance to the knife. However, it is as a lithotomist that he is best known. Patients came from everywhere to obtain the benefit of his skill. Unfortunately he was a poor writer and it was due only to the urging of his friends that he published a number of his cases. According to his

biographer, Dudley was an excellent teacher, and his lectures were always popular with his students. As evidence of this popularity we have only to examine Coleman's manuscript notes, which clearly show that strict attention was given to all of Dr. Dudley's lectures.

The title page of these notes reads " Notes from Prof'r B. W. Dudley, 1830-31." (See Fig. 1.) The first lecture is dated November 8, 1830 and entitled, " On Life." The first 100 pages cover what may be classified as " Surgical Pathology." The topics discussed were inflammation, different types of ulcers, hospital gangrene, mortification and burns. The



Notes from

Prof'r B.W. Dudley

1830-31

Fig. 1. Title page of Coleman's Manuscript Notes.

next 30 pages deal with Dudley's hobby and has the bold heading " On the Bandage." This subject is treated under these sub-headings, " The Influence of the Bandage on the Arteries," " The Influence of the Bandage on the Veins," " Influence of the Bandage on the Muscles," and " Of the Bandage in Gunshot Wounds."

The remaining lectures have very little organization as far as differentiating between medicine and surgery. After treating such surgical procedures as dislocation and fractures, hernia, tracheotomy, lithotomy and other similar subjects, Dr. Dudley next discussed diseases of the liver, spleen and kidney, and then elaborated on diarrhea and dysentery. From

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ference. The two substances impress differently the irritable organ to which they are applied.

Indeed the most scientific and rational, and, therefore, the best, classification of the articles of materia medica now extant, is founded on the difference of effect produced chiefly on the *irritable* parts of our bodies, by the various families of medicinal substances.

In relation, then, both to our sensibility and irritability, it clearly appears, that all different remediate articles are to be regarded as stimulants specifically different.

Illustration and further proofs of the foregoing opinions.

Further to pursue the subject of therapeutics, would be an encroachment on the limits of materia medica.

Having already transgressed the intended boundaries of this outline of my lectures, I here conclude it, reserving for the enlargement of another edition should one be called for, a synopsis of Hygiene, and Medical Jurisprudence.

THE END.

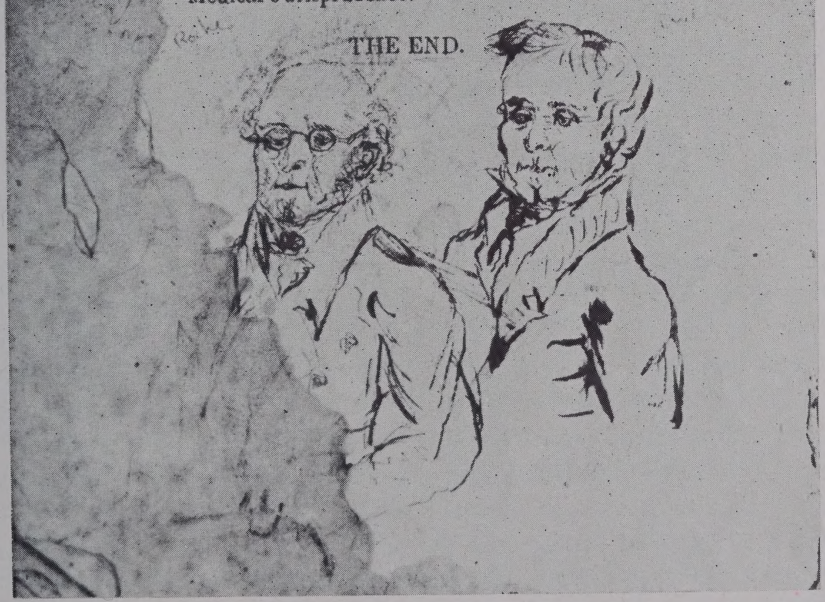

Fig. 2. Sketches of Professors B. W. Dudley (right) and John Roche (left).

then on he jumps from one subject to another such as: " Wounds of the Bowels," " Cancer of the Uterus," " Diseases of the Heart," " Aneurism," " Of Ligatures," " Diseases of the Skin," " Pelagra," " Varicose Veins," " Diseases of the Eye," " Apoplexy," " Cancer of the Scrotum," " Syphilis," " Gonorrhea," " Retention of the Urine," and " Dislocation of the Hip Joint." It is quite interesting to note that in the field of Dr. Dudley's own specialty, lithotomy, there are only four pages of notes, while to such subjects as Syphilis, Gonorrhea, and Diseases of the Heart there are from 10 to 14 pages.

Undoubtedly, one of the most interesting features of these notes is the index appended at the end. It is in detail and covers four pages of double column entries. Coleman apparently thought so much of his " Notes " that he had them bound in marble boards and leather. Altogether there are 358 pages in this manuscript.

An examination of the textbook proves just as interesting. Although the title page is missing, the subtitle page is present and it gives the title as the " Outlines of a Course of Lectures on the Institutes of Medicine." There is no author listed, but from pencil notations within the text and from consulting the Index Catalogue of the Library of the Surgeon-General's Office it is very easy to identify the author as Dr. Charles Caldwell (1772-1853) who was Professor of the Institutes and Clinical Practice at Transylvania from 1818 to 1837. Dr. Caldwell was highly rated as a classical scholar and was deeply interested in all branches of science. He frequently lectured on phrenology, and claimed to have been the first to introduce this subject in the United States. In 1821 he was sent to Europe by the University with $13,000 to purchase books for the library.

From an examination of his textbook it would appear as if it was an ideal text for the students. The subjects are presented in outline form which made it very easy for the students to follow the lectures and to prepare themselves for examinations. In the opening paragraph, Dr. Caldwell explains what is meant by the term " Institutes." As he defines it, it is the " Philosophy of Medicine—A branch of science consisting of an exposition of the principles and laws, necessary to be known to the physician in relation to health and disease, the preservation of the former, and the alleviation and removal of the latter."

He then goes on to say that the Institutes of Medicine comprise the four sub-ordinate branches of Physiology, Pathology, Therapeutics, and Hygiene. Undoubtedly quite a full course for four months. Coleman seems not to have followed these lectures as closely as he did Dr. Dudley's,

for in this book he gives us a glimpse of another one of his talents, that is, his ability as an artist. Probably this text would not have merited a second glance if Coleman had not sketched several of his professors on its pages. On the last page are two drawings, and from a comparison with the photographs of the faculty of Transylvania at that time, there can be no doubt that the sketch on the right is that of Dr. Dudley. (See Fig. 2.) By carefully examining the drawings through a lense the name Roche can be faintly made out to the left of the two sketches. A John Roche was Professor of the Greek and Latin languages at the University in 1830.

In the front of the book are three more drawings. Unquestionably one is that of Dr. Caldwell. The second sketch resembles Dr. William Hall Richardson who was Professor of Obstetrics and Diseases of Women and Children. It is not possible to identify the third drawing, but across the top is this notation, "Not fashionable to be ugly." Coleman no doubt had a sense of humor. He also was not without some ability as a poet as witnessed by this poem which is appended in the front of the book.

Some come to the lecture room for a walk
Some come just to laugh and talk
Some come the time to spend
Some come to meet a friend
Some come for observation
Some come for speculation
Some come to learn the professor's theme
Some come to gain his esteem
Some come the worth of their money to earn
Some come to study and learn

Then again, Coleman, like all students at times was wondering where he would set up practice, and so across the top of one page he wrote, "Where will I be December 2nd, 1836? Ans. God only knows."

Unfortunately there is no material in his collection relating to his second year in medical school, although the school's catalogue lists him as a student for the second session, that is, 1831-32, at which time we can assume he received his M. D. degree.

Of Coleman's life as a practitioner nothing is known, except that he apparently practiced at Port Gibson and Churchill, Mississippi, since these places are inscribed in the remaining books of his collection. Except for his name and residence, it is quite interesting to note that these books

have no other mark, sketch or inscription. It seems as if all his scribbling was done while a student. Also one sees Dr. Caldwell's influence since there are a number of books in Coleman's collection dealing with phrenology and the nervous and mental diseases.

Probably one can conclude from this brief glimpse into a student's life of the 1830's that students as a whole have not changed very much in the last 100 years.